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ABSTRACT

New York State can set up an accountability program, but to be successful it must rest on the following principles. Teachers, schools, and districts should be responsible only for initiating the best processes of education, not for the outcomes. Judgments of accountability must be nonthreatening and must result in a cooperative effort to help teachers and administrators improve their skills. The state must be willing to make the financial commitment to provide the materials, the testing, and the retraining necessary to make an accountability system function properly. If accountability rests on these three principles, it has a chance for success. If accountability is established only as a politically expedient program, not only is it likely to fail, but from the point of view of educational quality, it should fail. (Author/RIF)

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OCCASIONAL PAPER #27

EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

PITFALLS, PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES IN ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM FOR NEW YORK STATE

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EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

PITFALLS, PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES IN ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM FOR NEW YORK STATE

There is a seductiveness to the concept of educational accountability, especially in the public mind. The thinking goes something like this:

> We pay a great deal of money for education and what we pay is extremely visible--after all, most people in New York State actually vote on the amount of money that will be spent on education.
>
> Teachers are very well paid for what they do. (In the public eye, teachers work very little--six hours a day, nine months a year "with loads of vacations.")
>
> Despite that great amount of money and despite those high salaries, the schools are failing to do a good job. Proof of the latter is found in the newspapers every day with their recurring stories of lowered test scores and recounting of violence and vandalism in the schools.
>
> Given the above set of circumstances, teachers (and others) should be held accountable for what they accomplish.

So far, so good. There can be little argument about the need for accountability in education, as in all other

endeavors in which people are engaged. but the next step is much more difficult: determining just what educational accountability means and how it should be measured, evaluated, and enforced.

In the public view, the answer is fairly simple. Education can be treated in pretty much the same way as industry treats its products and the people involved in turning them out. In this "industrial model" of educational accountability, it might be suggested that since a person working on an assembly line or at a sewing machine is responsible for (can be held accountable for) turning out a certain number of pieces an hour or day or week, so can a teacher be held responsible for inculcating a certain amount of knowledge over a day, a week, or a year. If the sewing machine operator cannot meet her quota, she may lose pay or even her job. Similarly, if the teacher cannot meet her quota, she should be paid less, or lose her job.

This is obviously a simplistic view. Sewing machine operators and assembly line workers essentially work on a static product. Each piece comes to them in the same condition and must be treated in the same way. Education does not enjoy the luxury of such uniformity.

Each "piece" (or student) that reaches a teacher or a school or a district is different from the next one. Each student is destined to become something different. Each pupil needs to have something special done to him. And, finally, unlike the products moving across an assembly line, each

"student piece" has a different level of receptivity, and that receptivity, to a great extent, is beyond the control of the teacher.

The industrial model of accountability has many pitfalls, so many that it should be discarded in any further discussion of accountability, despite its potential for public popularity. The assembly line of education is not an organized and efficient way of getting a standardized and easily measurable job accomplished. Rather, education is more like a log jam, with each teacher trying to sit on the end of 25 or 30 bobbing pieces of wood in order to impart knowledge before the logs move down the river.

While most people involved with education reject the industrial model of accountability, few of them come to grips with the problem of developing a counter model. A search of virtually all of the literature written on the subject since 1970 (as listed in ERIC, see Bibliography attached), shows not a single cohesive plan for accountability.

Over and over again, articles purported to be about programs of accountability are revealed instead to be concerned about minimum competency testing. And even these articles invariably concern themselves with very limited testing areas (usually reading and related skills), often with the tag line, "tests for other important objectives of education will have to be (or have not yet been) devised."

The danger here lies not only in the limited range of minimum competency testing programs, but in confusing a

program of accountability (which should be read "holding someone or somebody responsible or accountable") with basic testing. If minimum competency testing is an accountability program in any way, it is accountability for the students and the parents, not the schools. Minimum competency programs simply say to the student, here is what you must accomplish in order to earn a piece of paper that says you are a high school graduate or a college graduate or a psychiatrist. Given the knowledge that this is the minimum that must be accomplished in order to reach a particular plateau, the student can then be held accountable for his accomplishments. But such a program says nothing about the accountability of teachers, schools or school districts.

Minimum competency testing is obviously going to be one aspect of any accountability system that is developed, and New York State's program goes beyond minimum competency testing. But to confuse the issue by indicating that such testing is synonymous with accountability is to do a disservice to the concept of accountability.

If minimum competency testing is not synonymous with accountability, neither is programmed budgeting. though that is another direction some of the writing about accountability takes. For example, Dr. Lorne Woollatt, former Associate Commissioner for Research, Evaluation and Communications for the New York State Education Department, in an otherwise excellent and valuable discussion of

accountability[1] suddenly veers from that subject and turns instead to a programmed budgeting system that would certainly provide some useful accountability information, particularly in terms of program cost, but which in and of itself is not accountability at all.

Accountability, as stated before, has a nice ring to it. It seems logical to hold people accountable for what they do, and the slogan is an easy one to raise. Finding proper vehicles for educational accountability is a more difficult task, and that task is not helped by those who choose to use the word to describe other programs in which they have an interest. If the State of New York is to develop an accountability system, it should be a total system, not just one piece or part of one.

DEFINING ACCOUNTABILITY

If an accountability system is to be established, one must start with an agreed-upon definition. Woollatt performs a service in his BOCES presentation, by providing a number of usable models. One, adopted by seven states that established the Cooperative Accountability Project, calls educational accountability "a process which serves to explain the results that are being achieved by public elementary and

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[1]Lorne H. Woollatt, "Implementing an Accountability System," presentation made at the 17th annual statewide BOCES meeting, Syracuse, New York, March 26, 1973.

secondary schools. It provides a basis for developing and understanding the relationship between the achievement of quality in education and the available resources in order to make educational improvements."[1]

This definition sees accountability in terms of how well resources are being used by the schools and seems to envision it as a wedge for obtaining more funds for education by showing the public the relationship between quality and available resources. Myron Lieberman turns it around slightly: "There is accountability when resources and efforts are related to results in ways that are useful for policy-making."[2]

In 1972 the National Academy of Education issued a report that failed to arrive at a satisfactory definition of accountability but identified four elements or concepts that would have to be included in any system that was established. Woollatt takes these four concepts and reorders them, saying "Accountability is first, a political process in the general sense of the term for it means dealing with people. Accountability is, second, an institutional process since it must deal with the schools. Third, accountability is a technical process which collects, organizes and evaluates information. And, finally, it is a matter of performance reporting--that is,

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[1]Lorne H. Woollatt, "Implementing an Accountability System," presentation made at the 17th annual statewide BOCES meeting, Syracuse, New York, March 26, 1973.

[2]Myron Lieberman, as in Joe Huber, "Accountability: Dangers in Misapplication," NAASP Bulletin, Sept. 1974, p. 515.

reporting the performance of students, teachers and others in relation to the input of the schools."[1]

Ewald Nyquist, then New York's Commissioner of Education, said that "accountability means a continuous willingness to evaluate education; to explain and interpret results with candor; to divulge the results to the publics or constituencies that need to know them, and to be personally and organizationally responsible for the weaknesses as well as the strengths revealed,"[2] (emphasis added). In the underlined section of this statement Nyquist begins to put accountability in line with public expectation. It is a definition that in its directness and candor can serve us well.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN ACTION

Woollatt takes another step further, acknowledging that accountability "in action" differs from evaluation in that accountability is "evaluation made public." Woollatt continues, "Good accountability, however, adds two new elements to the assessment of outcomes. The first of these is an ability to break out costs of a given program as for example, third grade reading. (Woollatt's interest in accountability

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[1]Lorne H. Woollatt, "Implementing an Accountability System," presentation made at the 17th annual statewide BOCES meeting, Syracuse, New York, March 26, 1973.

[2]Ewald Nyquist, "Education Commission of the States," Denver, Colorado, 1970.

centers on being able to cast out its effects through programmed budgeting.) "The second necessary element is the collection of data which will help to predict future outcomes. Such data includes information about selection of teaching staff, salary and teaching conditions, expenditure, potential revenue, community characteristics and student characteristics."[1] Obviously in this statement Woollatt has begun to grapple with some of the problems of input that make educational accountability different from the industrial model. While his emphasis is still on resources, Woollatt indicated that other factors must be taken into consideration.

Setting and Measuring Objectives

It is comparatively easy to measure some goals of education and very difficult to measure (or even define) others. Almost all of the literature on the subject of accountability gives as its examples, measurement in the area of reading or mathematics and then proposes that somebody, in some way, somewhere really should develop means for measuring other "non-cognitive" goals of education.

The fact is that the two basic elements of any accountability system--defining the goals of education and finding a way to measure them--are not settled. Some of the

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[1]Lorne H. Woollatt, "Implementing an Accountability System," presentation made at the 17th annual statewide BOCES meeting, Syracuse, New York, March 26, 1973.

goals of education get general agreement (though putting them into words often results in such generalities that they are useless). Other goals get virtually no agreement at all. So long as education is the product of individual and collective goals--rather than of State policies and mandates--there will be disagreement about education's objectives and about how well those objectives are being reached. In this nation, the government may proclaim some minimum or limited goals of education; government has not and should not establish all of the goals of education. The days of reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic as the goals of education are long behind us. Any accountability or evaluation system that rests on these basic skills alone will do a disservice to the total educational process.

Teaching to
the Tests

Assuming that objectives can be agreed upon and that tests can be developed to measure all of those objectives (or enough of them), a subsidiary problem is that of teaching to the tests. Any teacher can improve the score of his students on a test by insuring that they work on what is to be tested and that alone. But many of our best teachers take their students well beyond the bounds of testing. If an objectives-measurement-accountability system becomes all-pervasive, will we in the process of improving the words of education destroy the best?

Time Lines

Related to the whole question of measurement is the question of timing. Should the teacher, for example, be responsible for what was learned on any given day (Pre-tests at 8:45, post-tests at 2:45, teacher accountability at 3!)? Obviously nobody would suggest this as a proper model for accountability. But how about a week? A month? A semester? A year? Is a child's progress to be judged--and a teacher's success evaluated--in such relatively short time periods? Or will some system of six-year or 12-year judgment be instituted?

There is no single answer to this. Interim measurement is needed, long-range opportunities must be presented. But developing both and assessing their relative impact or importance in an accountability system, is an issue that must be faced. Is the fourth grade teacher to be held responsible for the progress that each or most or some of her students make in a given year, or must there be some longer time-frame during which the effect of her work might be assessed? Consider a youngster growing up in a neighborhood dominated by one particular religion.[1] As a young teenager, he would have vivid memories of contemporaries who by present terminology would be known as juvenile delinquents. They could have been involved in petty theft, petty harrassment, petty gambling, the use of foul language and the like. Assume that they did not do well

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[1]The author actually experienced a similar situation except the two youngsters became priests not physicians.

in school and any assessment of them would have been pretty low. Ten years later, both could have become physicians. Had the measurement been taken at that time in their lives, presumably the assessment of their educational background and what it had accomplished would be pretty high. Where along their timeline should the measurement be taken? And at what point in time (or points in time) is the teacher or educational system to be "held accountable"?

All of the above questions deal with areas of testing and measurement to one degree or another. Presumably at some point they can be answered or solved. Tests should be devised to measure goals other than for reading and arithmetic; the proper timeline for testing should be found; teaching to tests should be minimized. The testing and measurement industry is hard at work solving these and similar problems and though their solutions may not be easy (and certainly are not readily at hand), one must assume that solutions of some sort will be offered. But, such a change still will not solve all--or even the major--problems of accountability.

ACCOUNTABLE FOR WHAT?

The crucial element that makes the term "accountability" so attractive to the public and so distasteful to professional educators has been left out of the previous discussion. That element is the holding of something or someone accountable. What caused the failure--the teacher, the administrator, district policies, the materials used, etc.--and

what will be done to or about the faulty element, and by whom?

This element is the crux of the present popular demand for education to be held accountable and is what differentiates current demands from the testing and evaluation of the past. This element must be recognized, acknowledged and dealt with in any accountability program that is developed for presentation to the citizens of New York State.

How that is done will determine whether such an accountability system succeeds or fails.

Perhaps the most serious and difficult problem to be faced in developing a system of educational accountability is determining for what a person, school or system is to be held accountable. It is a truism that each child is different, that teachers in two different districts or two different schools or two different classrooms, might face entirely different sets of problems. What then is to be measured?

It is easiest to measure how well groups of students do against national or state norms. The difficulty is as obvious as the solution. Students starting with an educational deficit will do poorly; students starting with educational advantages will do well. Does this make the teachers, schools and districts of the latter better than those of the former? More importantly, does it make the teachers of those who do not meet national norms failures, to be held accountable for that failure?

Even if measuring groups of students against national, state or district norms made sense, education is not for the

purpose of helping groups but for the purpose of helping individuals. The teacher whose class averages well above the national norm but who has three individuals in that class who are learning nothing at all would be considered a success if groups alone were measured.

The emphasis in an accountability system must be on individual students, not on averages. Measuring against national or state norms does not provide the basis for such an emphasis.

If national norms do not serve as the basic unit of an accountability system (and we must always keep in mind that measurement is not accountability, only a tool of accountability) what other options should be open?

A suggested alternative is the measurement of students against goals set for them (or by them) over a given period of time. Eugene Howard,[1] Director of Accreditation in the Colorado Department of Education, states that "the process whereby the pupil demonstrates that he or she has accomplished a given objective--one which may be originated by the teacher or proposed by the learner--is the process of accountability." The logic here is that each student is evaluated as to where he is at a given point and what his capabilities are for improvement (learning). Then the teacher, along with parents, student and administrator, lays out certain goals for that

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[1]Eugene Howard, "Can Accountability Improve Secondary Education?", Educational Leadership, May, 1976, p. 599

individual student. Thus, a child entering the third grade might have the objective of reading at a fourth grade level at the end of the year, learning basic addition and subtraction (assuming his math skills to be low), etc. Goals could also be set in some of the less easily measured areas. For example, a goal could be accomplishment (i.e., to participate regularly in sports activities) rather than necessarily ability to exhibit a certain skill.

The advantages of such a system are that each individual student is considered and given an opportunity to start wherever he is and move as far as he can. The teacher is not penalized because students start from a deficit, nor is he rewarded because he has received a classroom full of bright students.

The drawbacks lie in the goal-setting. For one, if the goals are set at too low a level (guaranteeing success, as it were), the result will be to decrease educational opportunity, not to open it up. It will encourage safety, rather than innovation or effort.

Another drawback lies in the potential pigeonholing of students. Since less will be expected of the child who is " below norm" when he enters the third grade, that child may not be encouraged to move ahead, to increase his capabilities. Rather the teacher will have the opportunity, when the given goal is reached, to rest on his laurels.

Despite its drawbacks (and despite the fact that many teachers would need retraining in the skills necessary

to diagnose educational needs and write prescriptions to meet them) there is a great deal to be said for this type of measurement. The emphasis is on the individual, goals could be set for long-range and short-range accomplishments, cognitive and non-cognitive growth could be measured. The greatest drawback to this system of measurement (again remembering that the accountability element is yet to be introduced) lies in conditions beyond the teacher's or school's control.

For example, mobility of students creates problems. A teacher who prescribes for a child who comes in the middle of a year or leaves in the middle cannot be held responsible for that child's accomplishment. Changes in the child's home situation directly affect learning. The teacher can do little to control those changes. And the student himself (as well as his family) has a direct say in what will be accomplished. There are many students who, no matter what opportunities are presented, what goals are set, will not be motivated to meet them successfully. Sometimes this is a matter of timing; other times the causes are external. Whatever the causes, the teacher may not be able to control them and if she cannot control them, should she be held responsible or accountable for overcoming them?

ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE PROCESS

While it may not be possible to hold teachers accountable for the outcomes of education, it certainly should be possible to hold them accountable for the process of

education. This position argues that teachers are, or should be, trained, prepared and responsible for diagnosing specific students' needs and prescribing the best possible process for satisfying those needs. Under this concept, a teacher whose "prescription" did not work, would continue to work with the student, seeking better processes, better materials. If, for reasons beyond the control of the teacher, the chosen processes did not accomplish what was intended, the accountability would apply to the question, "were the best available materials and teaching processes prescribed for the student; did the teacher do the best possible professional job of understanding that child's needs and meeting them?" If the answer to those questions is affirmative, then the teacher has succeeded, even if the student did not absorb what was offered.

The idea of holding teachers accountable for the process of education is not a new one. Paul Mort, at Teacher's College, introduced the idea and preached it to his students throughout the '40's and '50's. Stephen Barro,[1] an economist with the Rand Corporation, and certainly not a part of the educational establishment, in a 1970 article suggested that "each participant in the educational process should be held responsible only for those educational outcomes that he can affect by his actions or decisions, and only to the extent

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[1]Stephen Barro, "An Approach to Developing Accountability Measures for the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, Dec. 1970 p. 199.

that he can affect them."

In 1974, Bernard McKenna,[1] who is a part of the educational establishment (and more important, of the teacher establishment), argued that just as a doctor should be held accountable for using the best known medical skills, but not for curing the patient per se, so too should teachers be held accountable for "conducting the best instructional processes (as conditions permit)" but not for guaranteeing learning per se.

The concept of holding teachers responsible for the process of education has a great deal to recommend it. Not only is it within the control of the professionals, it is not dependent upon outside conditions. The student, coming to a specific teacher, is at a measurable point. His strengths and weaknesses can be diagnosed and the teacher can be held responsible for prescribing the best materials and tools and teaching for him.

But that kind of accountability must be carried a step further. Suppose the materials are not available? Henry Dyer,[2] former Vice President of the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, noted: A teacher can be expected "to know and to do" only "to the extent that the

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[1]Bernard McKenna, Presentation to the 1974 New Jersey Education Association Convention on Accountability and Teacher Evaluation, 1974, p. 1.

[2]Henry Dyer, "Guidelines for Drawing Accountability Boundaries," Nation's Schools, May, 1972, p. 63.

school and the system give him the means and the opportunities." Can the school or district be held responsible for failure to provide these means? To a point it should be. Within its resources, the school should be held responsible for choosing the correct materials, the correct tools. Thus the concept of holding teachers and schools responsible for the processes of education seems a valuable and proper direction to explore.

There are, of course, some difficulties. One has already been mentioned, "...within its resources." If a district lacks the dollars to purchase the needed supplies and materials, it may not be held accountable for its failure. Certainly if a system of this type is developed, some form of equalization of educational expenditures and resources will have to be developed.

The second major drawback to holding teachers and schools and school districts accountable for the processes of education is that there are major disagreements as to what are the best processes in given situations.

Education is far more an art than a science. Teacher A might provide a student with a prescription and a set of tools and find that the student benefited from it; Teacher B might supply the very same prescription to the same child with opposite results. By the same token, both teachers could make differing prescriptions and have equal success. The process of education is beyond easy classification and the danger in holding teachers accountable for the process will occur when

a single process is determined to be the right one, whether that determination is made by a professional educator, the Regents, or the public at large. Education undoubtedly can be held accountable for its own processes, but it must be realized that more than one process can be correct in a given situation. The wise teacher should always be ready to try several possibilities before prescribing a specific one. A system of accountability for the process of education is going to have to allow for trial and error if it is not to stifle the real art of teaching.

DEALING WITH THE RESULTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Assuming that it is possible to develop a program for accountability dealing with the processes of education and that some form of measurement can be introduced, the State must still deal with the key issue of accountability--how it will react to the person, the institution or the district that fails.

An accountability system that does not hold someone or something responsible will not satisfy the public's understanding of accountability. But there are serious questions concerning what can be done.

The greatest power of the State rests in its control of educational funding. Should the State penalize districts that fail by depriving them of funds? Obviously this makes little sense. It would only result in withdrawing from those

districts the very resources they might be able to use to improve themselves.

Nor can the State logically think in terms of pumping money into "failing" districts. That would simply be an act of rewarding incompetence.

And how does the State--or the district--deal with the "failing" individual? Obviously one answer is to remove that person from his or her teaching position. But such action is neither feasible nor perhaps appropriate. In the first place, case after case has indicated that removing a teacher for incompetence is next to impossible under current tenure laws and court rulings concerning them. Those laws could, of course, be changed, but the likelihood of any major change in the State's tenure laws is very small indeed.

Even the possibility of penalizing failing teachers seems unlikely to succeed. Many school districts do have the contractual right to withhold periodic "increments" from non-performing teachers, but factually this clause is seldom invoked and would be challenged if it were.

In the second place, although the temptation is strong to use an accountability system to rid education of poor teachers, or to at least threaten them, such a program is not appropriate; it will not succeed. The very structure of school districts--in which the building administrators often see themselves as super teachers or at the very least as "members of the teaching profession"--militates against the success of <u>any</u> program that threatens that profession.

All the literature indicates that accountability will be most successful only at the local school level. John Goodlad[1] points out that the largest organic model likely to produce change most responsive to its own population's needs is the local school. History shows that at this level nothing works unless it is supported by the principal. Principals and teachers will not likely support an accountability system designed to remove them. They might cooperate with one designed to support them. Change is most likely to occur when the participants see potential benefit in the proposal, certainly not when they fear penalities.

How could such a program be accomplished? The answer would appear to lie in establishing some kind of inservice training or retraining program to help and direct the efforts of the teacher who does not succeed. Such a session or series of sessions might be seen in somewhat the same light as the special classes to which certain drivers are sent when convicted of continual speeding.

Ultimately, of course, the State can react to the failing district or school by taking it over--by assuming control of its day-to-day affairs. That the State has the power to do this cannot be denied. But if such a drastic action is to be suggested, the State must offer something more than more of the same thing when it moves in. It must have a

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[1]John Goodlad, "A Perspective on Accountability," Phi Delta Kappan, Oct., 1975, p. 112.

program and funds for restructuring the curricular program and for seeing to it that changes are made in the entire school system that will promote proper learning (or the proper processes of learning). This will take a tremendous infusion of funds and leadership since, in the replacement process, the same teachers, materials, and even administrators are likely to remain in day-to-day contact with students. When an athletic team gets a new coach or manager, it often results in a short spurt of better play or victories, but unless fundamental changes are made, the team usually returns very soon to its former level of performance. The same would be true in education.

THE COST OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In the best of all possible worlds, changes and improvements in the delivery of educational services would save money. Indeed, the slogan of accountability is often attached to the expectation of dollar savings. Put into the mouth of Mr. Average Citizen, it sounds something like this: "Teachers are being paid a great deal of money and they're not doing the job. Let's hold them accountable, get rid of the poor ones and replace them with good, less expensive replacements and all our problems will be solved. The education will be better and the cost less."

In the real world, the opposite is true. Any accountability program that is instituted is going to demand a

major infusion of new State money. There is no way around it.

The very process of establishing an accountability system is expensive. Any system that is established will be dependent upon the development of testing and pre-testing programs. Although the costs for these could be shunted onto the local districts, their ability to raise new funds at the moment is badly limited.

Beyond the cost of establishing and running an accountability program, there is another cost stemming from the need to react to the program. Whether that reaction is for retraining of teachers, for purchasing of supplies and materials or for a direct takeover of schools and districts, there will be a dollar figure attached.

Educational accountability is expensive. It can, however, lead to better, more rational and perhaps more succesful use of funds. It may well be worth the extra investment. But no one should go into a program of accountability expecting that one of the outcomes will be a lowering of expenditures. The opposite must be true.

DEVELOPING AN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM FOR NEW YORK STATE

Clearly, if an accountability system of any sort is going to be developed in New York State, certain guidelines must be established. Among those we would recommend are the following:

1. Change the terminology. The term "accountability"

has an aura that promises something that cannot be delivered to the public and at the same time threatens the professional educator. Call it responsive education or goals-oriented education or any other phrase that comes to mind, but drop the term accountability. It will make acceptance and understanding of whatever program is developed far easier.

2. Separate accountability from the State's current, extensive, minimum competency testing program. While competency testing may be a part of an eventual accountability process, the use of standardized tests tends to blur the true meaning of accountability. It is likely that children in Scarsdale will do better on minimum competency tests than students in Mt. Vernon, but neither the teachers nor the districts can properly be held accountable for the results. Nor should it be adduced that the teachers in Scarsdale are necessarily doing a better job than those in Mt. Vernon.

Dozens of factors must be taken into account. Minimum competency tests, when used as part of an accountability system, put unfair pressure on teachers and administrators who may be doing an exemplary job but who do not control the input on which they are working and may not have the resources that they need.

3. Hold teachers, schools, and districts responsible for using the best available <u>processes</u> of education, including setting goals, analyzing individual students, and prescribing the best programs for those individual students. In other words, instead of holding teachers responsible for

the outcomes of the educational processes, hold them responsible for doing a professional job of prescribing the best available program for each child. Hold the schools and the district responsible for making the needed materials available. Hold the student (and family) responsible for making use of the material and teaching that is offered.

4. Develop methods to measure the success of processes. This may be the most difficult part of establishing an accountability system. It is not enough to simply measure how well the student did, it is also necessary to determine if the best processes of education were prescribed for him. Development of a program to either insure or test individual prescriptions is a major undertaking beyond the scope of this current paper.

5. Develop a non-threatening reaction to "failure." The State, or some agency of the State, must act, but act supportively, when teachers fail to provide the proper processes or schools or districts fail to provide the needed materials and leadership. Firing individuals is not the answer. State takeovers may be a last resort but certainly not an every-day undertaking. A non-threatening system must be developed to help teachers and administrators do a better job. Part of this involves restructuring the process of teacher education which puts into the classroom people who are not capable of doing what is demanded of them. Part of it involves developing an overall approach to inservice education to upgrade present teachers, sharpen their present skills and

introduce them to newer and better methods.

6. Provide additional education funding. A program of accountability will be expensive. The State must be prepared to invest new funds to:

a. Retrain teachers who do not have skills in prescribing for individuals or provide programs such as Project PLAN that can substitute computer judgment for that of the teacher;

b. Insure that all necessary materials are available for the school districts, thus equalizing educational opportunity;

c. Set up ongoing training and retraining programs to increase teacher skills;

d. Maintain and expand the present minimum competency testing programs so that students can be held accountable for properly using the educational opportunities that are offered.

CONCLUSION

New York State can set up an accountability program, but to be successful it must rest on three principles:

1. Teachers, schools and districts should be responsible only for initiating the best processes of education, not for the outcomes.

2. Judgments of accountability must be non-threatening and must result in a cooperative effort to help

teachers and administrators improve their skills.

3. The State must be willing to make the financial commitment to provide the materials, the testing and the re-training necessary to make an accountability system function properly.

If accountability rests on these three principles, it has a chance for success. If accountability is established only as a politically expedient program, not only is it likely to fail, but from the point of view of educational quality, it should fail.

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